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STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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SUBJECT: Burma: GOB Publicly Criticizes U.S. Human Rights and Narcotics Reports

¶11. (U) On March 5, the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper published two announcements by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticizing the USG's recently-released Human Rights Report (HRR) and International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR). The MFA statement on the HRR "categorically rejects the biased assessment on the human rights situation" and stresses what it describes as the GOB's "cooperation with the United Nations in many fields including the promotion of human rights." The separate statement on the INCSR also "categorically reject[s]" the report's conclusion that Burma has "failed demonstrably" to meet its counter narcotics obligations. The statement lists GOB actions to combat drugs and claims that its efforts were "carried out with little or no external assistance" and that "sincere efforts have not received the full acknowledgement they deserve." Such official denunciations of USG reports are not uncommon. Full text of the statements appears below:

¶12. (U) Begin text of MFA announcement on the HRR:

The United States Department of State released on 25th February 2009 its 2008 Country Report on Human Rights Practices of over 190 countries, including Myanmar. As in the past, the report repeated its unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations of human rights violations in Myanmar.

It is saddening to find that the report contained the usual sweeping accusations of human rights abuses in Myanmar without verification of the validity and accuracy of the information and reliability of its sources. Instead of making false allegations at other nations regarding human rights matters, the United States should concentrate on uplifting its own human rights records.

Myanmar has long been a victim of a systematic disinformation campaign launched by anti-government elements, generously funded by their foreign supporters. The rootless allegations of human rights violations which invariably emanated from anti-government elements have found their way into the reports of the US State Department. Thus, there is a need to verify all information before it is judged fit for inclusion in official reports.

Myanmar believes that the promotion and protection of human rights should be conducted in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter and international law. Human Rights issues must be addressed based on cardinal principles of objectivity, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference

in the internal affairs of States. There should be no double standards or politicization of human rights issues. It is only cooperation, rather than politicization of human rights that can bring about improvement in human rights situations around the world.

Pursuant to its Foreign Policy, Myanmar has been cooperating with the United Nations in many fields including promotion of human rights. Myanmar has welcomed the visits of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Ibrahim Gambari for a total of seven times. Likewise, the current Human Rights Rapporteur for Myanmar, Thomas Ojea Quintana has already visited Myanmar twice since his appointment last year. The Supplementary Understanding on the Treatment of Complaints regarding Forced Labour between the Government of the Union of Myanmar and the ILO was also extended again on 26 February 2009.

Like other developing countries, Myanmar accords high priority to the right to development. It has been striving for the all-round development of the country, paying attention to narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas, especially the border areas where the majority of the ethnic nationalities reside. The report ignored such positive developments taking place in the area of promoting the right to development of the people in Myanmar.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar therefore categorically rejects the biased assessment on the human rights situations in Myanmar contained in the United States Department of State's 2008 Country Report on Human Rights Practices.

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated: 4 March 2009

End text.

¶3. (U) Begin text of MFA announcement on the INCSR:

The US Department of State on 27 February 2009 released an International Narcotics Control Strategy Report on over 100 countries, including Myanmar. The report has groundlessly identified Myanmar as one of the three countries in the world that had "failed demonstrably" to meet its international counter narcotics obligations. It is regrettable that such an unfair categorization was made, ignoring Myanmar's strenuous efforts in combating narcotic drugs.

Myanmar has been waging a relentless war against illicit narcotic drugs for decades. A comprehensive 15-year National Plan was laid down in 1999. Myanmar's national efforts against the drug problem are based on two strategies: (1) eradication of narcotic drugs as a national task and (2) total eradication of opium poppy cultivation through the promotion of living standards of all the national races residing in the border areas where opium poppy was cultivated. These strategies are supported by three tactics: to reduce supply of drugs, to reduce demand and to increase enforcement measures.

Amphetamine-type stimulants pose a new and ominous threat because they are extremely easy to produce. The best way to counter this threat is to deny the traffickers of precursor chemicals required in the production of these drugs. Myanmar neither produces nor imports any precursor chemicals.

At the regional level, Myanmar is working together with other members of ASEAN to reach its common goal of making the region free from drugs by 2015. Myanmar has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with six countries for the creation of a Greater Mekong Sub-Region Drug-Free Zone. Myanmar aims to rid the country of narcotic drugs by 2014, one year ahead of the date set by ASEAN.

The problem of drugs is closely linked to transnational crimes including terrorism. It is a global problem which can only be addressed through close international cooperation. National efforts must be complemented by cooperative efforts both at the regional and

international levels.

The allegations of money-laundering leveled against Myanmar are also unfounded and politically motivated. Myanmar joined the UN Drugs Convention in 1988 and became a member of the Asia Pacific Group on Anti-Money Laundering in March 2006. Due to Myanmar's Anti-Money Laundering Projects in accordance with international regulations, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) deleted Myanmar from its list of Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories on 13 October 2006.

Myanmar's national efforts in combating drug problem were carried out with little or no external assistance. It is a sad fact that these sincere efforts have not received the full acknowledgement and support that they deserve.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar therefore categorically rejects the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report issued by the US Department of State as inaccurate and politically motivated assessments.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated: 4 March 2009

End text.

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